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Evidence of White Admiral butterfly (*Limenitis camilla* L.) larvae feeding on Aspen (*Populus tremula*)

Whilst searching honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) leaves in a well-known Surrey locality, following up resulting larvae of the White Admiral (*Limenitis camilla*) from hatched eggs located on 17th July 1995, I noticed two nearby leaves of Aspen (*Populus tremula*) with feeding damage of exactly the same nature as on the honeysuckle leaves – a long exposed bare midrib with leaf eaten well down either side. The classic and unmistakable feeding pattern of the White Admiral. Unfortunately both larvae were absent from their midrib “seats”, as indeed were three out of four known larvae in similar situations on the honeysuckle which was in close proximity to the aspen. The White Admiral suffers high mortality as a first instar larva, as I have ascertained from regularly searching for larvae in July and August prior to their hibernation in September.

It is interesting to note here that the larval foodplant of the European Poplar Admiral (*Limentis populi*) is most commonly aspen and there is an illustration in the excellent Swiss book *Tagfalter und ihre Lebensraume* (Arten, Gefährdung, Schutz 1987) of an aspen leaf damaged by the larva of this species. It is identical to the leaves located by myself in Surrey and I am certain that they were utilised by the larvae of the White Admiral.

An extensive search of the surrounding aspen growth was undertaken without finding similar feeding damage or an extant larva. There was a wide variety of feeding patterns on the leaves, ranging from mere holes, edge of leaf, to a complete strip bar leaf veins, leaving a skeletal appearance. There was no comparison on the aspen leaves to the unmistakable feeding pattern of the early instar White Admiral larva. It is important to note that the aspen leaves were in such a highly suited position for ovipositing White Admirals – dappled shade, next to an already well utilised spray of honeysuckle leaves. A rarely found combination which perhaps led to this unusual ovipositing choice?

Are there any other records of White Admiral larvae being found or suspected of feeding on aspen? Initial literature searches by myself have yet to reveal any. The aspen leaves were photographed and then pressed for a permanent record. The same site will be visited a little earlier next year with the hope of finding an actual deposited egg or feeding larva.

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